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# Memories of Yesterday



Mr. William Facey of Surplus street has a yellowed day book brittle with age that sheds light on life here in Duxbury more than a century and a half ago. It's an heirloom ledger called **JOSHUA CUSHING: HIS BOOK**.

The first entries were made on February 2, 1793, when Joshua spelled Duxbury as "Duxborough." Until 1801 he recorded his accounts paid and received in pounds, shillings and pence. After that date he used dollars, cents and mills. We learn that in 1794 he paid only three shillings for a quarter of veal, five for 15½ pounds of spare ribs and one shilling for a pig.

In 1795 Joshua paid four shillings each for a bushel of corn and "one gallon Molases." Tea was also relatively expensive, for one pound cost two shillings, or the same as "8 feet of oak plank." According to an entry made in January of 1798, a quart of brandy went for a shilling, as did a pound of tobacco. Joshua sometimes worked an entire day for a dollar in 1801, but for that amount he could buy a pair of shoes. "West Indies rum" cost as much as 20 cents a pint, but "new rum" sold for half that amount.

In his quaint scrawl and spelling Joshua Cushing indicates that services were often bartered for goods. For one job he received "three pecks of Carrots," "one hundred of herens," and "2½ wait of fresh Pork."

The prices Joshua mentions in his day book contrast sharply with those mentioned by Abigail Adams (wife of the later President John Adams) in a letter she wrote in 1776. She complained that meat cost two dollars a pound, tea and sugar a dollar more. A short time later the Revolutionary War shot prices sky high. One pound of butter cost 12 dollars and—hear this—one pound of tea 40 dollars!

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